

**Transcript of statement of Designate Director-General Kandeh Yumkella
to the 30th Session of the UNIDO Industrial Development Board
21 June 2005**

Excellency, Mr. President of the IDB, the Director-General, Honorable Ministers, Distinguished Representatives, Permanent Representatives to UNIDO, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I don't have a prepared speech. I wanted to deliver to you from my heart on a very emotional and momentous day. I feel humbled and honored to stand in front of you as your elected new Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. It is with humility, because from my training in Africa, that greatness comes from divine intervention, and from faith that men and women have in other elements of humanity.

I come from a village that probably has less than a thousand houses. When I heard the news this morning, I called Freetown, the capital, to tell my mother, and they said, "oh sorry, she has gone to the village". I said "but why has she gone to the village, she is supposed to be in the city". They said, "she is praying for you". That is why I say it is with great humility, that I stand here, coming from there, to be here today, to be here because you the member states of UNIDO, have expressed deep confidence in my ability to lead this great institution. I thank you. You have spoken, you have spoken loud and clear: forty two votes. This for me represents what I represent: consensus, consensus. I am a Director-General, not of Africa, but of all the member states of UNIDO. I thank you for that resounding victory.

During the campaign, particularly since February, I endeavored to visit forty seven out of the fifty-three missions that are present in Vienna, that are members of the Board. I struggled to do it, because I do believe in consensus. And that will be the hallmark of my administration here: building consensus, not only amongst member states, but amongst my staff.

I have been part of UNIDO's reform, UNIDO's transformation. I have served two great leaders; Mr. Mauricio Maria y Campos, and Mr. Carlos Alfredo Magariños. I was an apprentice at the feet of two great men. This time I lead, through that apprenticeship, but based on my own philosophies.

I discussed many things with you and many of you, in the course of the campaign, challenged me, whether it was in your mission, whether at lunch, many of you challenged me, and in the process I became even more mature and more confident about what to do for UNIDO and with UNIDO.

In order that it becomes a social contract between yourselves and me, I codified it here. What you see in this document (I could have released it last week), I said no, I give only a synopsis, when I win, I will codify it. It is not just what I believe, it is some of what I heard from you in the different embassies, when you challenged me on ideas about the future.

Of particular importance to me is page 15, my management philosophy. Let me give you a background to that. In the early days of the campaign I visited one of your embassies, one of your colleagues. I had prepared myself to talk about

competitiveness, to talk about manufacturing, well-prepared, and I walked into his office, he received me, served coffee. He said, “OK Mr. Yumkella, you want to lead UNIDO. What is your management philosophy?” He disarmed me. I was not ready. He had read too many UNIDO reports, he did not want to hear about competitiveness, he wanted to know what is my management philosophy. He challenged me, but fortunately, when I got the same question from four ambassadors later, I was ready. You will see similar things reflected here, some of you will recognize yourselves because yes, I am a manager who listens.

I was trained, my father, my ancestors were chiefs in Africa. We were trained that a good leader listens to his people. A good leader leads with humility. A good leader must believe in his people. Page 15 is important because I talk a lot about my staff.

UNIDO cannot be great without its staff. I want to inspire my staff. I want to challenge them. I warn my staff in this very first speech, I am from a country that is listed as one of the poorest in the world. I will challenge you to prove that yes, you can deal with poverty alleviation, not in theory, but in practice.

I mention my belief in the field system; in UN coordination, I mean it. I am the only Director in UNIDO who stepped down and served in the field. It is not a trivial issue. I believe that for UNIDO to impact the millennium development goals, we must be present in the field. We must be. But not only present, we must be effective in the field. So my staff I tell you, maintain flexibility. If I was a Director, and I went to the field, nobody is immune. You can rotate, but you must prove your relevance and your ability in dealing with the poor and the disadvantaged at the country level.

Your Excellencies, there will be time, hopefully in December, when I can do an elaborate speech to you. This for me was an opportunity, and I am most grateful, to Ambassador Stelzer for calling me. He said “Why don’t you come in and say a few words”. Thank you, thank you very much, you have given me a big responsibility, I emphasize, from across the membership of UNIDO, every region. I know, I know what it took for many of you to look at us, all of the candidates, all honorable men, to decide, yes, that young man will take the mantle after Mr. Magariños.

In all this, there was still fun in the campaign process. I give you a joke that happened to me, to say that “yes” in the business that I will do here, humanity is also important. I went home one day and I said to my wife, “you know, Mr. Magariños each time he addresses the Board, he does it in two languages; Spanish and English. You know if I get elected, I will try to do the same”. She reminded me “Oh yes, you know you promised the Burkina Faso President and President Kunare and others that you will speak to them in French when you become the Director-General”. Then I said, “You know, I made another mistake, I promised the French Ambassador as well, that I will speak in French.” Then she said, “Oh you men, you are all so dumb sometimes why didn’t you promise German instead? – because you live in Austria, at least you can learn it quickly”. So I said to her, “Remember what happened nine years ago, I had two friends, I told them I would learn German. The one was Austrian, the other was German, they spent a lot of time arguing about who had the best German”. So then I realized, I’d better settle with French, your Excellency. So indeed, I will try my best to copy that good example of Mr. Magariños to see if in time, not immediately, but in time, I can indeed address my constituency in at least two languages. I will try.

Your Excellencies, finally, it is a tough job. I have watched it from close quarters: in the eyes of Mr. Campos during the crisis, 1996-1997. I have seen it from the eyes of Mr. Magariños for eight years. It is a tough and lonely job. I say to you member states, be patient with me, be patient with me. I will do my best. I will lead this organization so that it is great, so that it addresses the needs of developing countries and economies in transition, at the same time helping even developed countries achieve global mandates.

I have given you an idea here of what I have discussed with you. For me this is a document for dialogue. It is not set in stone, because development itself evolves over time. Let us keep discussing. As you look at all the visions in the next few days, I am open to dialogue.

What I ask of you member states is: don't tie my hands. Please give me a budget that my staff and myself can deliver. Please also be open to new ideas, because I believe today in the development world we must be willing to look at other paradigms of development. I say it here, because I am going to do it.

I will put a lot of emphasis on south-south cooperation. We must be intellectually open to know that some of the countries that have done the most work to actually alleviate poverty in their countries are in Asia. We need to learn from those examples. South-south cooperation, I have seen all the resolutions, we must make it practical. Fortunately, the donors have also been willing to finance such initiatives. Please, funds mobilization will be important. I can't do it alone. I believe we can do it together.

On my second page, I end by saying "together we can all make a difference". Indeed, together we can all make a difference. When we discuss poverty alleviation, or industrial development, we must always remember it is about people. It is not an abstract concept. It is about people in my village. So let us be real, let us be practical. Theory must come to practice; practice must be financed well.

I thank you for your attention, and I hope we will all walk together for the greatness of UNIDO.

Thank you very much.